The Working with TIGER/Line Shapefiles series is an overview of how to access and use the US Census Bureau's TIGER/Line Shapefiles. Each pamphlet is a quick how-to guide for accessing and using TIGER/Line Shapefiles as well as joining data from the US Census Bureau to the TIGER/Line Shapefiles.

WHAT SHAPEFILES ARE AVAILABLE?

3 and 5-digit ZIP Code Tabulation Areas
Alaska Native Regional Corporations
American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian Areas
American Indian Area Tribal Subdivisions
Blocks
Block Groups
Census Tracts
Combined New England City and Town Areas
Combined Statistical Areas
Congressional Districts
Consolidated Cities
Counties and equivalents
County Subdivisions
Landmarks (Point and Area)
Metropolitan/Micropolitan Statistical Areas
Metropolitan Divisions
Military Installations
New England City and Town Areas
New England City and Town Area Divisions
Places
Public Use Mircodata Areas
Roads, Rails, etc. (in All Lines file)
School Districts – Elementary, Secondary and Unified
States and equivalents
State Legislative Districts – Upper and Lower Chambers
Urban Areas
Voting Districts
And Many, Many More

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Working with TIGER/Line Shapefiles Series:

1. Downloading TIGER/Line Shapefiles

2. Opening TIGER/Line Shapefiles into ArcGIS

3. Downloading Data from American FactFinder to use with TIGER/Line Shapefiles

4. Joining Census Data to TIGER/Line Shapefiles

5. Creating a Thematic Map

Questions about TIGER/Line® Shapefiles?

Visit:
http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger

E-mail:
geo.tiger@census.gov

Call:
(301) 763-1128

Don't have ArcGIS™?

Download ArcGIS Explorer for **free** from ESRI at:
http://www.esri.com/software/arcgis/explorer

WORKING WITH TIGER/LINE SHAPEFILES

Downloading TIGER/Line Shapefiles

GETTING STARTED

There are 3 methods for downloading TIGER/Line Shapefiles from the US Census Bureau. The examples in this brochure are from the 2008 version but can be used for any TIGER/Line Shapefile versions.

- Website Interface
- Direct from FTP site
- Connect via FTP Client
- Direct from Data.gov

To download the shapefiles you will need an Internet Browser or an FTP client as well as a utility that can unzip files.

See the TIGER/Line Shapefiles website for identified issues with downloading and unzipping.

WEBSITE INTERFACE

The website interface download method requires the least amount of technical knowledge.

Start at the US Census Bureau's TIGER website – http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger.

Select the version of TIGER/Line Shapefiles you are interested in (e.g. 2008 Shapefiles). The nation-based files can be downloaded directly from the main download page.

To download state-based or American Indian Area-based files, use the selections on the right side of the screen to select the area of interest. For counties, select the state first and then the county from the right side of the screen.

For a single file, click on the name of the file you want to download.

For multiple files, check the boxes next to the shapefiles to be downloaded and "Download the Selected Files."

Save the file to your computer or open the zip file. Repeat as needed.

DIRECT FROM FTP SITE

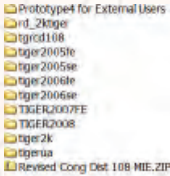Another option is to go directly to the Census Bureau's FTP site through a web browser. The address for the TIGER/Line Shapefiles is ftp://ftp2.census.gov/geo/tiger/.
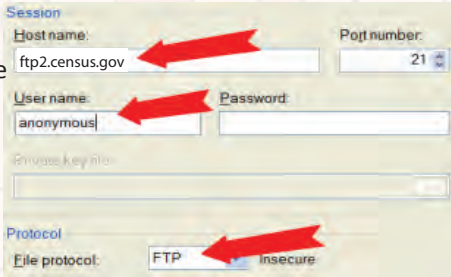

One file can be selected and downloaded at a time. Newer versions of Internet Explorer have the capability to display the FTP site in a "Windows Explorer" format. Entire directories (folders) can be copied at a time using copy & paste or drag & drop.

From the ftp site, navigate to the version of the TIGER/Line shapefiles to download (e.g. TIGER2008). Refer to the TIGER/Line Shapefiles technical documentation on the TIGER website for shapefile naming conventions and contents.

CONNECT VIA FTP CLIENT

To access a large number of files the best option is to use an ftp client software to connect to the Census Bureau's FTP site. There are many free ftp clients (WinSCP shown).

The host name must be the Census Bureau's main ftp site - ftp2.census.gov. Use "anonymous" for the user name. No password is required to connect via ftp client.

After logging in to the ftp site, navigate to the shapefiles by going to the folders - "GEO" then "TIGER." Select the vintage of the TIGER/Line shapefiles to download (e.g. TIGER2008). Select the files or folders to ftp and copy them to your computer.

DATA.GOV

The TIGER/Line Shapefiles are now available through the Data.gov website. Select the "Geodata catalog." Search by keyword and/or agency to find the individual shapefiles. As new TIGER/Line Shapefiles become available they will be added to the Data.gov website.

Refer to the TIGER/Line Shapefiles technical documentation for additional information about the shapefile naming conventions and contents.

UNZIPPING FILES

The files that are downloaded are zipped to save space and to ensure that you download all of the necessary files.

Most newer systems have an unzipping utility built-in to the operating system. However, there are several free or low cost unzipping utilities such as PKZip or WinZIP. There is a known issue using the Windows built-in utility and downloading files through the website interface. In this case, you may need to use a different unzip utility or an alternative download method.

If you selected multiple files through the website interface, the downloaded package is a zipped file which contains additional zipped files. The unzip utility needs to be run two times to use the shapefiles. The default name of the downloaded package is multiple_files.zip. Inside this zip file are zipped packages of the shapefiles, such as tl_2008_us_csa.zip. The tl_2008_us_csa.zip file contains the five files needed to view the Metropolitan/Micropolitan Statistial Areas in the United States.